

Accelerating Transportation Projects

From highways to bridges and ferries to vanpools, work continues on many fronts to strengthen the backbone of Washington's economy – its transportation system.

Eighteen months ago, Governor Locke and the Legislature enacted a \$4.2 billion transportation improvement plan. This 10-year package of transportation projects and reforms is providing the state with the tools to begin fixing and expanding our state's worn and crowded transportation system, improving public transportation and, among other investments, replacing four auto ferries built in 1927.

\$60 Million in Projects Accelerated

Governor Locke's Transportation Budget proposes to speed up some of the projects, getting them into construction two years early. He puts \$60 million worth of projects slated for the 2007-09 Transportation Budget into the 2005-07 budget, which begins July 1. The accelerated projects range from \$28 million for bridge preservation and replacement to \$9 million to eliminate barriers to spawning salmon. Also included are highway and pedestrian safety projects.

These new construction projects are part of a state transportation program that also includes preservation and maintenance of thousands of miles of roadway and thousands of bridges, snow removal on mountain passes, operations of the nation's largest ferry system and many other critical state transportation needs. The work is performed to state and national standards, with a proven track record of on-line, on-time, and on-budget project delivery.

Protecting a \$100 Million Investment

The Governor's 2005-07 Transportation Budget protects the public's \$100 billion investment in our state transportation system, and funds essential operations and management of our state highways, rail and ferry programs. The Governor's budget continues implementation of the transportation improvement plan, also known as the "Nickel Package."

The Nickel Package tied funding to specific projects. Taxpayers know exactly how their tax dollars are being spent. The Washington State Department of Transportation has already completed several of these construction projects, including the Vancouver area's I-5 widening project from

Salmon Creek to I-205 and the truck-climbing lane on I-90 east of Cle Elum. These priority projects, and many others like them, will improve traffic safety, cut traffic congestion and improve the flow of freight and other commerce throughout the state.

The Nickel Package, built on a 5-cent per gallon increase in the gas tax, invests in key areas:

- \$3.4 billion for highway and road projects
- \$605 million for transit, vanpools, passenger rail, and new multi-modal ferry terminals that will provide travelers with better connections among rail, transit, ferry and other transportation services
- \$100 million to preserve existing ferry vessels and terminals, and to complete acquisition of four new auto ferries

Rail, Rural and Special Needs

Also included in the Nickel Package are significant improvements to non-highway transportation programs. Over the 10-year time-frame: \$210 million will be invested to improve passenger and freight rail around the state; \$75 million in new funding will provide rural communities with better public transportation services through rural mobility grants; \$98 million in new para-transit and special needs transportation grants will provide mobility for elderly, disabled and low income citizens; \$30 million will strengthen state and local commute trip reduction programs – including restoration of the commute trip reduction tax credit; and there will be \$30 million in new vanpool grants to help ease congestion on major roadways.

Transportation Reforms

Several transportation reforms have been implemented to ensure that the Transportation Department has the tools necessary to deliver projects on time and on budget. These include design-build contracting, authority to contract out for construction engineering services and environmental permit streamlining – to help speed up projects while still protecting the environment. In addition, the Transportation Performance Audit Board was established in legislation to ensure an even higher level of accountability from public transportation agencies.